

Comments from Public

As of 3/18/2013

Common themes taken from Braddock Park Comment Cards:

- Concept D - provides a buffer from Route 1, like the block long park, include visual access from Route 1
- Neighborhood Post Office – importance of having a retail PO on the block or nearby, will need some parking
- Passive/Green Areas – need for more green space in the Braddock Area, include trees and flowers
- Dogs In the Neighborhood – balance the need for places for dogs with places for people (equal mixture of people who want the park to be dog friendly, and for those who want to make sure it's not a dog park)
- Safety and Security – consider lighting, ensure that design doesn't encourage usage "after hours" or crime, protect park visitors from traffic
- Multiple Uses – park should provide opportunities for all ages, separate into distinct areas of hard and soft surfaces, encourage active and passive areas, public art, play areas for all ages
- Water elements – many like the idea of interactive water features as play, art and to dilute noise from Route 1; others think they would be too expensive, unattractive off-season and hard to maintain
- Smaller buildings – keep buildings within the height of neighboring buildings, nothing too large
- Event space – opportunities for small performances, movie nights, concerts
- Simplicity – design should be simple with few features, open and green
- No Playgrounds – alternative play areas okay, but no bright colored "kids only" type

Proposed Park Configuration

- Prefer Concept D, but please don't fence the park in
- I like Concept D - it keeps some of the traffic and noise separated from the park
- Concept D: I like the retail space along Rt. 1 Henry Street. Good for retail. Safety for kids. I like the length of the green space along Fayette. It creates a courtyard effect for the residents flanking the park along Pendleton, Fayette and Wythe (great window views!). I'd like to see eateries, restaurants.
- I'm in favor of Concept D so long as the south side of the block can be developed as a park on an interim basis. If not, then Concept B seems to be most likely to result in a park being developed on an interim basis.
- Prefer Config. #D with temp park on south end configured for max use with benches, etc.

- Option D board on the layout this would provide excellent access for all of the buildings. Further this will provide the safest access as it will create a buffer from Route 1.
- Plan D is favorite. Keeps park area away from noise and traffic on Rt. 1. Makes it seem more like a neighborhood park.
- My favorite configuration is configuration D. Configuration B is second favorite. I don't like Config. C because the park space is right next to Route 1, and could be dangerous to children playing. D&B give some buffer between Route 1 and the park space. This is CRUCIAL!
- Option D provides a nice mix of buildings with sufficient park space.
- Option D
- I like Graphic 1
- Prefer D. Need to keep park away from noisy, busy Rt. 1. Powhatan Park fronts Rt1 and it is not pleasant nor is it used enough. Not a peaceful place.
- I like the proposed configuration (D) as it does the best job at providing a visual and sound barrier to the traffic on Henry Street.
- Locate green open space on south side of block – so as to minimize changes ?? entire site is constructed. Opposed to retaining building. Concept D is a good start!
- Concept D – primary. Concept C – secondary.
- I like concept D as proposed.
- Concept D. Possibly expand park to parking lot across street? Use for parking/adult fitness.
- Concept D is a good start!
- Interactive water fountains would be fantastic as I believe we don't have any of that nature in this area and our summers are long and hot! Any water features would be greatly appreciated as long as it's accessible, and with kids in mind, safe for all of us to enjoy.
- I love the photo of the water feature that adults and children can wade in.
- A small pond with a fountain would also be my preference.
- Water features very desirable.
- Water feature and landscaping in the center – leading from the entrance on Henry. No exercise area.
- Water is always relaxing and fun for all age groups.
- Parc de Andre Citron – Paris, France. The park @ the waterfront in Georgetown.
- Running path bordering the park.
- Like it
- Café needs to be given to maximize success of retail in this area. This store is vacant to hold this open house because retail at the Asher isn't working. Like the idea of a notched design with nooks/edges – better than a plain square park.
- Park could be set up into 3 distinct areas – for example, area 1 could be passive, area 2 could be water feature, and area 3 could be art.
- Multipurpose for light fun activities and relaxing. Looks fine. Don't think the config is as important as the next question – programming elements. Too many elements will be costly and a dense mess. Less is more.

- I would prefer a more adult oriented park with less emphasis on the tot lots. Walking paths and comfortable seating would be nice. 3 zones. Central – harder surface – active area for small performance, Tai Chi, chess, etc. Each side grassier with bocce in one. Rocks – big rocks in the other.
- Please make sure there are ample trash cans and dog bag stands.
- What are parking options?
- Landscaping is always ? Less wild look more manicured. Plenty of pedestrian paths for walking.
- Simple with trees and benches and drinking fountains. Straight lines are good. Good parks are simple and not too big (1 acre is fine). Don't put strips on any paths – these are barriers. Barriers like planters that you have to walk around keep people out entirely.
- Green space with a few benches and exercise bars/items.
- Locate green open space on south side of block – so as to minimize changes ?? entire site is constructed. Opposed to retaining building.
- Green area with paths. Children play but don't fill up space.
- Preference would be an unfenced 'mall' type green area that would not be a place for noisy activities. Trees and landscaping would be great, a fountain even better.
- Open, green space with landscape also desirable.
- There is plenty of retail going in under all the big developments, but very little open space. Very disappointed
- A place to picnic and relax, not watch sports. Too close to Rt 1 for playground equipment.
- More green space for open play better than lots of features.
- Add a road to separate park from development in scheme C
- I think there should definitely be a buffer zone between the park and route 1, but I also think it is important that the park can be seen from Route 1 and not hidden behind buildings.
- Sound insulation from Route 1 should be considered. I live at the corner of Wythe and Henry and the traffic sound from Rt 1 is getting worse as the years go by and more construction in the area.
- Shade pavilion or covered area – trees. Any noise control for traffic on Henry. Ensure no gate for playground existing into Henry.
- In favor of development on Henry, park behind.
- I believe it is necessary to have a building line along route 1, not only to provide a visual barrier but also a noise barrier for the park. That is why I feel that the Graphic 1 proposal would be the best option.
- Good. I like the separation from Rt 1. Ideally, I would like as much space as possible, with smaller buildings.
- Would like to see the buildings facing Rt 1 to blend in with neighborhood and not be taller than 4 levels. Much too tall.
- Mixed use is appropriate, but restrict height of buildings to 2-3 stories. We do not need another 7 story building.

- I would like to see the art deco building incorporated because of the historical and artistic value. Good uses for it would be public restrooms and a police or public safety box or office.
- I would like the greenery(?) be where the old building will be torn down. I oppose the retention of the existing 600 N. Henry Building. It is just plain unattractive and would add nothing. I favor a design which would make the park visible from Henry. Like Concepts A or C. Concept D is also good.
- Consider re-routing the bus line to not drive passed the interim park
- Retail parking needed for post office is necessary
- I am finding it harder and harder to park within a block of my house. I am not in favor of anything that will remove more public parking spaces. Do not remove Post office. Do not loose street parking for bulb outs, new fire hydrants and new curb cuts. Do not drive out local business that currently relies on leased space on this block.
- Prefer keeping the Post office building where it is. I use it often for mailing packages. Parking spaces at Post office are ?
- Keep a free standing Post office with at least 5 dedicated parking spaces.
- Would like post office to stay or within 1 block radius.
- Need a dog park component. There are more pet owners in surrounding neighborhoods which no longer have a convenient location to let their dogs run.
- Possible area for a dog park?
- Dog park area (fenced) highly desired.
- Dogs on leash passing through should be directed to dog parks nearby.
- Concept B
- Would like to see Concept A, allowing at least some green space to be visible from Henry.
- Concept C: Go with simple passive park. Fountain in center, diagonal walkways, benches facing in, 60-75% soft scape, 40-25% hardscape. 2nd row of trees paralleling street trees. Some open lawn areas. Tot lot of in shaped corner of park.
- I would prefer Concept A.
- Park isn't big enough
- The entire block should be a park. People don't want more tall building in this area, right by a 2 story home. Plus they're hiding the view of the park by additional residents. I head a lot of disappointed people who thought the park was going to be the entire block. Very disappointed.
- Disappointed that the entire acreage is not for park use.
- Should be as much of the whole block as possible. Our area is starved for parks and places to meet neighbors.
- Flexible. Please ensure police would be able to easily patrol.
- Need plenty of lighting

Park Programming Elements Options (e.g., Amphitheater, Passive Areas, Adult Playgrounds/Fitness Areas, etc.)

- Fountains, benches and tables.
 - Water feature – maybe interactive or a large fountain similar to what one finds in European parks. Pretty landscaping – flower garden similar to waterfront park.
 - No water elements please. I am just thinking of how ugly city hall looks most of the year. I don't think Alexandria is warm enough for interactive elements either
 - Any water fountain would lose their appeal as they have to be turned off for part of the year.
 - I am not a fan of having any water elements unless it is passive like a pond or something. Please no interactive water features.
 - Interactive water features.
 - The water feature would be a great addition to the neighborhood.
 - Water elements = great!
 - Water features to mask noise.
 - Love to have interactive fountains!
 - No water feature. It wastes water and is expensive to install and maintain.
 - Suggest interactive water feature/spray park instead of decorative fountain
 - Love the water elements and kids play areas.
 - Would love if it incorporated public art and a water feature
 - A water feature in the open space would be nice.
 - Play fountains are great
 - Prefer water features.
 - Would love if it incorporated public art and a water feature
 - Interactive water fountain!
 - I love the water element ideas, but am concerned about cost for proper maintenance.
 - Amphitheater and/or interactive fountain would be both a great addition – a way for people to be active and mingle (live concerts or plays outside) (cooling off in summer months when it's 90+ degrees). The fountain in Georgetown rocks!
 - Favor public art, landscaping, seating areas, non-interactive fountains.
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- Less children – they have the Rec centers. More educational culture and fitness.
 - Our balcony looks out right over the space and we're worried about screaming kids.
 - Please do NOT turn this park into a children's playground. We already have several of those in the neighborhood (Hunter-Miller, Jefferson Houston School). The park will be surrounded by mostly condos and apartments. It will serve better as a passive place with areas that can host special events (e.g., concerts, markets).
 - Also no bringing colored tot lots.
 - Children are very likely to use a play area.
 - Stuff for kids would be good, but otherwise keep it simple.
 - NO adult fitness – people have gyms – Y is close by.
 - Against adult/children playground as Charles Houston Rec Center is 2 blocks away.
 - Adult fitness equipment is rarely used in parks I've seen..

- Lots of playground equipment for both older and younger kids.
 - I don't know that the surrounding buildings have enough families with small children to need a playground. It would be great to have a park the adults could enjoy.
 - Children play areas and adult fitness options would be awesome.
 - I prefer what you're calling 'adult' playgrounds to 'children's' playgrounds because they can be designed for use by adults and children. Most of the parks/playgrounds in the city are used by nannies and kids and childless adults are not welcome and indeed have no reason to be there. Adult playgrounds/fitness areas are open and most preferable.
 - Games would be a BIG plus. Activities for both kids and adults.
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- Biggest priority is green space and play areas for children.
 - Emphasize open space rather than specific activities.
 - I would like to see as much green space as possible.
 - Empty space for play
 - Green space for working out and fitness areas would be preferable.
 - Since park is actually so small don't put too many structures. Leave a lot of open space.
 - Green space and open area is best.
 - No playing field.
 - Park should be separated into 3 distinct regions with plenty of green space
 - I also like the idea of open space for MULTIPLE PURPOSE USE!
 - Green space is highly needed in this area/neighborhood, so overall this is a fantastic concept.
 - Open grassy area in the sunshine and shade (trees) to offer the 'American backyard experience' to all of us townhouse people – who love their homes, but wish they had a yard with grass.
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- I don't know how much use an amphitheater would get
 - Amphitheater using land forms
 - An amphitheater would be wonderful.
 - I think amphitheater is one of the best ideas, since there are not many others in the area. Also it could be used by all groups.
 - With such a large space, an amphitheater would make a lot of sense.
 - Not loving an amphitheater.
 - Amphitheater-like with trees around the fountain. Benches surrounding one to watch the kids in comfort are good. I like the layout of the one in Reston Town Center.
 - Kill amphitheater – will require rest rooms – not a good idea.
 - Can an amphitheater be designed to accommodate a farmer's market?
 - Amphitheater and/or interactive fountain would be both a great addition – a way for people to be active and mingle (live concerts or plays outside)
 - Amphitheaters are large, hardscaped and seldom used. One meeting maybe. But large space devoted to this ?? have so little open space
 - Would like to have concerts and community events there.

- I think a passive area would be most beneficial to this area., but a passive area could have many uses.
- Prefer passive areas that will not generate noise.
- I would like greenery, flowers, benches. Since I live at The Henry and my road faces the park, I don't want excessive noise.
- My votes on the other side indicate general preference for a place of natural calm without too much built up stuff or jungle gyms. I think this makes sense in an area that dense and growing, where there are already areas for 'activities' – like the YMCA nearby and running/biking trails and sports fields at the school in Del Ray. We need more Zen!
- Passive areas for relaxing, some special event activities. Fitness can be okay individually, but Jefferson Houston is just a block away.
- Passive play areas would be nice new addition.
- Prefer passive areas
- Area for public art and relaxation; however the noise from Henry St. may negate the benefits from the space. Being so close to Henry St. may cause some issues if a children's playground is configured.
- Small scale recreation – raised seating walls w/planting behind.; passive areas; public art.
- Landscaping is important.
- Landscaping = great!
- Cherry Blossom trees and encore azaleas (these bushes bloom 3x a year!). Incorporate lots of flowers.
- Yes – flowers, landscaping, shrubs
- No surface parking in the park. We need to get a landscape/park designer or board as soon as we can.
- Favor public art, landscaping, seating areas, noninteractive fountains.
- Fenced in or at least designated dog area.
- Fenced in dog area – there are literally hundreds of dogs in this area and none of the other parks are within convenient walking distance.
- No dog park!
- Space for Farmer's Market and dog park.
- Please. No Dog Park.
- I like the idea of decorative art that adds some character without detracting from the amount of green space.
- Would love if it incorporated public art and a water feature
- Area for public art and relaxation; however the noise from Henry St. may negate the benefits from the space. Being so close to Henry St. may cause some issues if a children's playground is configured.
- Favor public art
- Small scale recreation – raised seating walls w/planting behind.; passive areas; public art.

- Concerned about dark open areas for teenage kids to congregate and cause harm to neighbors walking at night. Prefer less areas for sitting. Please have good lighting and maybe security cameras.
- Key requirement will be effective lighting during night time hours. There is quite a lot of traffic at rush hour.
- Lighting.
- Interesting lighting.
- Furniture.
- Picnic tables.
- Some minimal seating areas, as well, would be appreciated.
- Favor public art, landscaping, seating areas, noninteractive fountains.
- Please keep post office.
- Keep retail on Henry for safety
- Given the size of the park, one acre, I would recommend keeping the design simple with 1-2 major features.
- What are the projected demographics? I would guess kids only under about 5, lots of young adults in 20s and 30s and perhaps a number of downsizing seniors. So: adult activity; on the fringe places for old folks to sit and watch the young folks; and a corner with some space for toddlers could be shared with old folks.
- No cart vendors. Chess boards ok. Public seating place ok if it can be closed off at dusk.
- Should be planned for 100% completion, not piecemeal. Buildings should be high end townhomes (\$1M, 2000+ sq ft).
- It is insulting to propose a tax hike and increased parking restrictions on the current budget while simultaneously proposing to spend my tax money on temporary and un-needed improvements that will reduce the availability of much needed car repair and postal services, as well as increase competition for a dwindling number of parking spaces.
- Space for Farmer's Market
- Farmer's market. Movies. Food kiosks.
- Minimal!

Additional Comments

- Thank you for all of your hard work!
- Thanks for the open house.
- When does the city plan to hire an architect/designer for the park? Thanks for hosting this community event.
- I really like the idea of this park.
- Thanks for giving us the opportunity to provide input.
- Publicize next meeting
- Very happy that this block is being redeveloped. Happy to stay involved or provide additional input.

- Do not waste my tax dollars on an interim park! I am tired of watching current residents, businesses, and services/amenities and parking spaces be destroyed for the benefit of new construction, developer profits, and people who don't live here now! Not to mention the adverse effect on traffic! I support the petition to add public parking underground and maintain the existing business use of the lot.
- Can't wait!!
- Totally in favor of staged development for example interim park until full development.
- More meetings with residents in the area.
- Thanks for asking. Thanks for helping to build a better neighborhood at Braddock Road.
- You should have 'opposed' as an option to indicate desire to avoid financial waste, water waste, and other reasons against features. You should have 'green space' to indicate desire for that.
- Seek a design that reflects Alexandria's heritage as a railroad town. A spur that ran along Fayette Street is the reason that there were warehouses on Fayette and will be denser residential housing. There is no recognition of the rail heritage of the Southern Railway yard in Carlyle. The only recognition of the rail heritage of the RF&P Yard is in the name "Main Line Boulevard." Railroads dominated Alexandria's economy in its second stage as a City. (The first was a seaport; the third was a bedroom suburb and the fourth is as a central city.)
- Please allow dogs to have access to park, on leash, and must clean up after dog.
- Any options for small dog-friendly area?
- Small dog park would be desirable. Monroe street park has too many big dogs for us to utilize.
- Should be dog-friendly
- We need place for dogs to potty – design planting edge for this so they don't go on the lawns.
- Space should be dog friendly. The less elements that interfere with that the better.
- I understand that the space is not ideal for a dog park, but the fewer elements that would take away from any dog friendly areas the better. Therefore, ideally would like there to not be any specific 'playgrounds' or children areas that would exclude dogs.
- Lessen noise. This is a very noisy area and don't want additional noise.
- Worried that the park will become a local hangout for older kids.
- A natural looking sound/traffic barrier on Rt 1 side would be nice. Earth berm – climbing wall and trees.
- City should consider monitoring the area extensively at first to ensure that people clean-up after their pets and there is no unwanted soliciting. Crime has been a problem in this neighborhood and litter is especially bad. Any new park should not become a garbage dump.
- I am concerned that the park design doesn't encourage noisy informal groups to congregate at night.
- Too close to Rt 1 for a playground – safety issues. Need to include screening from traffic on Rt 1 – crawling vines on a gazebo or something.
- Focus on safety – good lighting, separation from Rt 1

- Is there a plan to still have a local post office? Walking to a post office is a high priority for me.
- Postal services to remain in the area.
- I am vehemently and unalterably opposed to closing and/or moving the Wythe Street post office and its parking.
- Keep the post office close! I love its location now!
- What is zoning/land use allowable on the USPS parking lot off Henry?
- The interactive water fountains would also be good for hot summer days.
- We need water in the heat which is at least half of the year in this area.
- Adult exercise area and water may dispel noise and be better with Henry St.
- An area where people can work out. Setting up different fitness stations (i.e., pull-up bar, incline platform for sit-ups). Also a running path around the park.
- We need more uses around the block, Starbucks and Blue & White are good but not best. Upzoning along Henry St. and allowing for some mixed use would help. Uses around the park are just as important so concept A & B are just as good as the preferred options (The preferred option may create 'turf' instead of a pedestrian street.).
- Get rid of the retail.
- Make N. Henry more pedestrian friendly. Interested in future of parking lot (for postal workers) on Henry, get owner involved in redevelopment.
- Want park configuration to be open/facing street. Safety is also important. I think we need to emphasize multi-purpose use.
- Config. D!!! Please!
- For Concept D – the buildings should be high-end residential (condos or townhomes) with underground parking. There should be ground level retail or restaurant. There should be no major separation between the buildings and the park (e.g., road).
- Unless you fix Jefferson Houston School, the neighborhood will not have families with school-age children, so that will dictate usage decisions. Apple trees should be a feature because site of white house cider mill a century ago – get White House commercial brand to donate \$1 pollen sterile apple tree varieties so you'll have pretty blossoms without apples to make a mess.
- I am forwarding my suggestion about the manufacturers of White House apple products donating some real apple trees for the park. If they are all pollen-sterile ("triploid") varieties (see examples at end of message), you will not have to worry about them making apples which might make a mess.
- Plant some big trees along the streets.
- More Zen please!
- Imperative to locate green, open space at the least in the city owned parcel of land on which is ?? Parked cars and is surrounded by ugly chain-link fence – the area badly needs this element.

- Amphitheater here needs to be considered in context of programming. Don't waste the space with a theater if there's no plan for concerts or other events here. Passive areas, public art, and landscaping are compatible with any design in this area, and should be part of any concept plan.
- There is a company called Kaboom that helps build playgrounds in lower income areas – I don't know that we qualify, but maybe worth checking into.
- No basketball or tennis courts.
- See sketch attached; call for translation [redacted].

➤ **See copies of emails on the following pages for additional public comments.**

Email from Kay Chewning:

March 6, 2013

Ms. Faroll Hamer, Director
Department of Planning and Zoning
faroll.hamer@alexandriava.gov

Mr. James Spengler, Director
Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Affairs
james.spengler@alexandriava.gov
cc: braddockloftshoa@gmail.com

RE: Braddock Small Area Plan – Proposed Park on Wythe Street Post Office Site

Dear Ms. Hamer & Mr. Spengler:

As a longtime resident of the Braddock Lofts, I am looking forward to the addition of a public park in the adjacent block. When I bought my home here so many years ago (2002), I had high hopes for the evolution of the Braddock neighborhood.

It has been quite slow to happen, and we've missed some opportunities along the way (we could have used a grocery store on this side of town instead of 5 grocery stores on the east side of Washington Street), but nonetheless, I feel the Braddock area is finally beginning to see its potential come to fruition.

A public park will be a much needed component to the mix.

Our Braddock Lofts community has been a very thoughtful group, both in advocacy and strategy when it comes to our involvement in our neighborhood. We were some of the first new construction homeowners to take a chance on this part of town, and have a vested interest in seeing it evolve to its highest and best use.

To that end, several of us have discussed key points we feel are critical with respect to a new park between Wythe and Pendleton:

- Landscape Architect: The City should hire a professional Landscape Design Architect for development of the Park. This should be done sooner rather than later so we can do this the right way from the beginning.
- Comprehensive Plan: We feel it is critical to “master plan” a complete (100%) design for the entire site, rather than planning section by section. We must take a holistic approach, not a piecemeal approach to the design. One missing or changing piece to the puzzle would greatly impact the remainder of the site.
- No Interior Roadways: There should NOT be an internal surface road running through the site. It would detract from the transitional aesthetic between uses, and would visually & physically bifurcate the block.
- No Surface Parking: There should be no surface parking inside the park.

- **Parking Garage:** Parking garage should be planned for under building structures (not green spaces), and garage spaces should not be funded and/or constructed by private citizens or businesses who are not an invested developer of the greater site.
- **No Playground:** We of course love children and many of us have had little ones at some point, however for this particular site, we do not favor a children's playground (with typical playground equipment). The majority of homeowner's and new renters in the surrounding blocks are "SINC's" or "DINC's" (working professionals with no at-home children). And, there are several other traditional playgrounds within walking distance for those who want to visit a more traditional playground.
- **No Doggie Park:** We all love our pets in Alexandria, but there are abundant dog parks ... we envision this park to be greater than just a "doggie park".
- **Height Restriction:** We feel it is critical that any building(s) constructed on the site which are located nearest to Braddock Lofts should not exceed the height of Braddock Lofts.
- **Premier Level "For Sale" Residential Only:** Any future residential buildings proposed for the site should be "high-end" (2,000 SF +) and "for sale" only (no rentals). These could be modern high-end lofts (ie. The Wooster in Arlington), or other premier-level residences, but the upper-level price point is needed in the neighborhood.
- **Retail:** Ground level retail should have a plaza component; e.g. restaurant.
- **Cohesive Integrated Design of Uses:** Any future Developer of proposed buildings or structures should adhere to a design which will correspond with and support the public uses of the park.

I see this as an opportunity for Alexandria to do something innovative, unusual, and most of all beneficial for the community. The park, whether it is a place for some creative public art, a rock climbing garden, or a green gathering spot for a summertime "screen on the green" movie or musical concert, should serve those who live in this neighborhood.

The Braddock area is a new frontier for Alexandria, and we shouldn't feel that we must design only within the banal colonial confines of "Old Town". The residents are craving new, progressive and creative amenities. A "green/sustainable/LEED" component would be welcome also.

Many of us bought into this community 10 years ago with visions of "Soho", "the 14th Street Corridor" or "Clarendon/Courthouse" ... but unfortunately it never quite evolved ... until very recently. New residents also have high hopes and expectations for our neighborhood.

Thank you for working so hard on this. We appreciate all that you do to help us plan our City. We are optimistic that the Braddock Area can be something that people will one day be drawn to ... a new and creative side of Alexandria!

Sincerely,
 Kay Chewning
 703-548-2220
 N. Henry Street

Updated email from Kay Chewning:

From: K. Chewning [<mailto:chewningkk@aol.com>]

Sent: Thursday, March 07, 2013 10:29 AM

To: James Spengler; Faroll Hamer

Cc: Laura Durham

Subject: Re: Braddock Area Park (Wythe Street Post Office Site)

Mr. Spengler, Ms. Hamer,

I would like to clarify one point in my letter.

While I said I'm not in favor of a "Playground", I should say, I am totally in favor of incorporating child-friendly components (such as a rock climbing area, or other interesting elements appealing to children).

I just don't envision the park to be a lot filled with red plastic sliding boards and swing sets. I am hopeful the Park will be geared to a broader audience of all ages.

When I re-read my letter, I didn't want anyone to think I was "anti-child". Quite the opposite.

Thanks for allowing me to clarify.

Kay

K. Chewning

chewningkk@aol.com

MY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC SQUARE; SPECIAL
ATTENTION TO ITEMS MARKED WITH ASTERISK (*), 3/8/2013
PETER KATZ; 1123 WYTHE ST (FACES PARK)

What Makes a Good Urban Park

*City parks have been endangered by suburban flight, privatization and design overkill.
Here's a short list of basics for planning true public spaces.*

By Peter Katz

Everyone has a favorite park, or should. Mine is Washington Square, in the heart of San Francisco, bordering Chinatown and the laid back book stores and coffee houses of North Beach. First platted around 1850, the park is mostly open with a simple looping walkway. The subtle ripples and rolls of its naturalistic topography give me a sense of how the city's hills and valleys must have once looked. In and around the park, neighborhood life flourishes. Regulars claim its sunny benches to read and chat. Elderly residents practice Tai-Chi. School children play frisbee. Commuters disembark from buses along the park's edge on Columbus Avenue. Lunchtime picnics are daily events on the sprawling green lawn.

Unfortunately most small urban parks, particularly those in downtowns, fail to deliver the sort of civic experience that can be enjoyed in Washington Square every day. Such parks are the victims of strapped city budgets, the latest theories of crime prevention and the nervous tinkering of overzealous designers. Ultimately, these assaults can be traced back to a larger cause—the disinvestment in cities which occurred as a result of America's postwar flight to the suburbs.

Though the money needed to build and maintain urban parks left town, the people who needed them most remained. By the seventies and eighties, when downtown land values soared along with the gleaming new highrises, it became ever-harder to realize the idea of a true public realm at the heart of our cities. Many once-proud parks like New York's Bryant Park and Los Angeles' Pershing Square fell on hard times. Lack of funds led to lower standards of maintenance and security, which in turn led to crime, drug dealing, and the use of parks as havens for the homeless.

Good Park: Peter Katz 3/20/95

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Windswept Plazas and Sterile Atria

But people's need for parks didn't go away. A new form of quasi-public space was invented by the private sector to meet the needs of downtown workers. Generous plazas such as those facing New York's Park Avenue and Avenue of the Americas were provided by property owners, often in trade for increased building height. Though such spaces provided a dramatic setting for the modernist boxes of Corporate America, the experience at ground level was sometimes less than appealing. The combined forces of wind, weather, and the airfoil effect of many of the heroic towers rendered the wide-open spaces below virtually uninhabitable for much of the year.

Enter the atrium, to tame the extremes of climate. In cities such as Montréal, Minneapolis, Atlanta, and Houston, an elaborate system of climate-controlled interior atria, lobby/gardens, and passageways enable workers to park, walk to their offices, go to lunch, run errands, and work out at the health club without ever having to set foot on a city street. These private, "public" spaces offer two essential elements that many city parks fail to provide: safety and a clean, well maintained environment.

But all is not well in the new downtowns and edge cities that we created over the past forty years. Like the proverbial sidewalks that in some places "roll up at five o'clock," these private corporate domains shut down not long after the close of business each day, forcing after-hours city-dwellers out into the now second-class public realm of the street. That once-vital street now resembles a ghost town; its restaurants and merchants have moved indoors to capture the more lucrative daytime trade.

The Park as Public Forum

More troubling than the lack of downtown street life is the erosion of the intimate and longstanding connection between democracy and the public realm. Many popular movements have been played out in the town square—Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution in Wenceslas Square and the student demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

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Free speech and soapboxes wouldn't stand much of a chance in the corporate plazas and shopping malls of today. Uniformed security patrols would whisk an offending citizen away long before a sympathetic crowd could ever form. Legal questions about private ownership versus public use have been debated in the highest courts. Special booths for pamphleteers in many airports attest to the awkward compromises resulting from such court decisions.

Even more important than such legal issues are the issues of public versus private "character." Just as many of the corporate plazas of the sixties and seventies assumed the function of public parks, albeit poorly, the newest generation of city parks are too closely patterned after their corporate predecessors.

What Makes a City Park Work?

What, then, defines a "good" park, a true urban public place? My own criteria for a successful urban park can be counted on one hand:

1. **A park should be "nearby" for everyone.** Public open space, such as a square or "commons" should be at the center of a neighborhood; no more than five minutes' walk from most residents. Public buildings, shops (a corner store at minimum) and a transit stop should be near the center too. Smaller parks should be scattered throughout the neighborhood so that no one is more than three minutes' walk from a park.
2. **A public park should look and feel truly public.** Being bounded by streets or sidewalks on all sides is one sure way to communicate "publicness." The presence of civic buildings and monuments also reinforces this public character.

Conversely, spatial relationships get confusing when private houses or buildings *back* up to a park, without a clear public zone in between. This ambiguous edge fosters conflict between those who live next to the park, and others who come from the surrounding area. A better approach would be for houses to *front* the park, so that porches, front yards, and streets buffer the edge between public use and private enjoyment.

3. Parks should be simple and not overdesigned. Trees, grass, some walkways and a bench: these are the basics of my ideal park. Unfortunately, many new parks are so "designed" that it's hard just to find a patch of grass where one can sit in the sun, or a clear meadow to set up a volleyball net. A park can have a strong identity and implied use—for example, active versus passive recreation—but it should also have enough of the "basics" to satisfy the needs of a broad range of users.

4. A park should retain or enhance the natural contours of the land. In densely settled areas, it's hard to get a sense of how the terrain looked before it was built over. I'm particularly aware of this in my own hilly city of San Francisco. I feel that too many new parks, both here and in other cities, are terraced and bermed beyond recognition. The legendary Olmstedes moved a lot of earth too, but they did it a way that always looked more natural than what they started with.

5. A good park should allow you to both see and walk *through* it. Part of this relates to obvious issues of safety, but this principle also relates to the earlier point about "overdesign." In many new parks, I feel like a victim of planning, forced to navigate an obstacle course just to get through.

By contrast, many older parks offer a simple network of walkways, providing a variety of routes for those who are just passing through. Such fleeting moments in an otherwise hectic day may be the only time that some city dwellers get to experience the pleasures of a park.

After years of neglect and misdirection, there may at last be some rays of hope for the future of urban parks. New York's renovated Bryant Park and Boston's Post Office Square have been runaway successes among a new generation of parks, largely because their designs respect the basics outlined here. They're effective models which can and should be emulated in other cities. By contrast, Los Angeles' redesigned Pershing Square and San Francisco's new Yerba Buena Gardens, while welcome contributions to the public realm of their respective cities, seem overdesigned and cluttered to the point of dysfunction.

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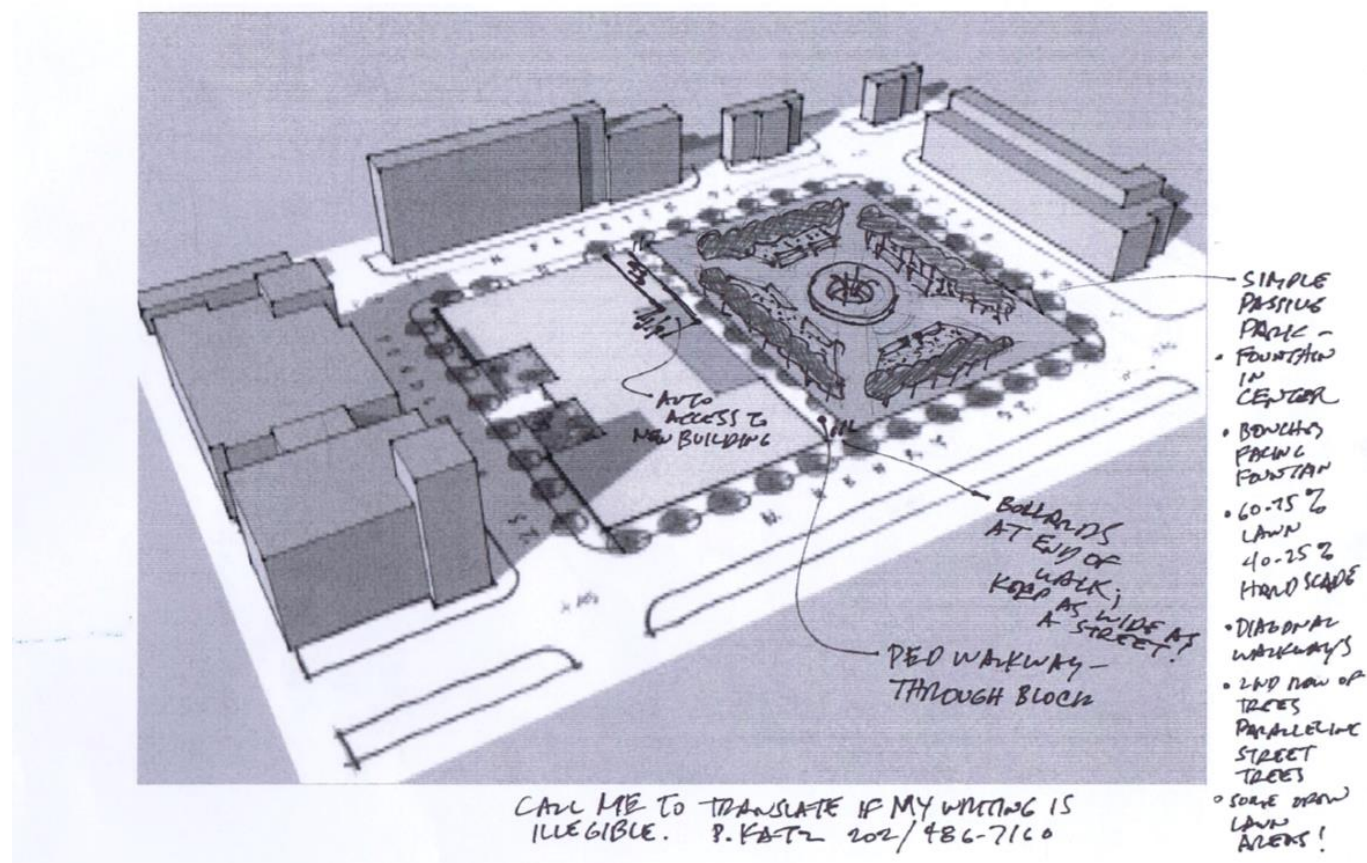
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As planners, designers, citizens and local governments take a renewed interest in public spaces, I offer them all a bit of advice before they get back to their drawing boards: Get out and take a walk in a “good” park. Look at the elements that cause it to work so well. Talk to the people who use it and find out what features they value most. And while you’re there, don’t forget to smell the flowers.

Author Credit: Peter Katz, a San Francisco-based consultant, is author of *The New Urbanism: Toward an Architecture of Community*; McGraw-Hill, 1994.

Submitted by Peter Katz, March 12, 2013:

A quick sketch of a possible layout for Concept C



Submitted by Peter Katz, March 12, 2013:

The park, overall, should be an elegant traditional neighborhood square formally organized around a fountain or a monument like the images on the left...



...but it could also, in its peripheral areas incorporate small playfields, some play equipment and a few picnic tables in simple enclosures like the example above

Results of Park Programming Elements Preference Survey, March 9, 2013
Out of 105 Surveys

Element		Strongly Desired (5)	Moderately Desired (4)	Neutral (3)	Less Desired (2)	Not Desired (1)
Amphitheater		14	17	26	23	24
Play Areas for Children		23	18	23	11	27
Interactive Fountains		23	16	14	11	39
Passive Areas		64	19	10	6	4
Water Features		31	24	20	8	19
Public Art		25	20	3	14	12
Adult Playgrounds/Fitness Areas		20	13	17	16	36